

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10199

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, XH,VN, VS

SUBJECT: VATICAN "CONTACTS" WITH COMMUNISTS

FROM LODGE

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI (VATICAN FONMIN)
SEPT 19, I SAID THAT I REALIZED THAT MY AUDIENCES WITH THE
POPE HAD CREATED SOME IRRITATION AMONG THE REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE SMALL COUNTRIES WHO HARDLY EVER SEE THE POPE.

2. CASAROLI MADE LIGHT OF THAT CONSIDERATION. HE SAID THE POPE
HAS OBLIGATION TO WORK FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD AND THAT,
THEREFORE, HE HAD TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THE GREAT POWERS SINCE
THE GREAT POWERS HAD THE DETERMINING VOICE. IN THIS RESPECT,
THE LARGE AND THE SMALL COUNTRIES DID NOT HAVE THE SAME AMOUNT
OF POWER. HE FELT THAT THIS FACTOR WAS A BIG PART OF THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF MY MISSION.

3. HE SAID, WITHOUT MY ASKING HIM, THAT HE "HAD A CONTACT"
WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE EVIDENTLY HAD MADE UP HIS MIND IN
ADVANCE TO TELL ME. HIS "CONTACT" WAS WITH RYZHOV, THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR TO THE QUIRINAL WHO ALSO SENT CASAROLI PAPERS
GIVING THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT ON CURRENT INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS
SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST, CHILE, ETC. RYZHOV, SAID CASAROLI,
WAS THE USUAL SOVIET DIPLOMAT WHO DID NOT WARM UP MUCH. THE
MATERIAL IN THESE PAPERS DID NOT DIFFER FROM WHAT THE SOVIET
GOVERNMENT TOLD EVERYONE ELSE. THIS CONTACT HAD EXISTED SINCE
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1967 AND WAS STARTED DURING PODGORNÝ'S VISIT.

4. STANE KOLMAN, YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR TO HOLY SEE, ON SEPT 24 SAID THAT RYZHOV IS MUCH MORE OUTGOING AND AGREEABLE THAN THE USUAL SOVIET DIPLOMAT. HE IS A TEXTILE ENGINEER BY PROFESSION, SAID KOLMAN, AND CAUSED GENERAL SURPRISE WHEN HE BECAME AMBASSADOR TO TURKEY. HE IS THE BROTHER-IN-LAW OF KOSYGIN, KOSYGIN'S WIFE BEING HIS SISTER. KOLMAN SAID THE CONTACT BETWEEN CASAROLI AND RYZHOV HAD BEEN FRUITFUL AND HAS LED TO AN AGREEMENT COVERING CATHOLIC BISHOPS IN LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA. HE SAID CASAROLI HAD SIMILAR CONTACTS WITH THE POLISH, HUNGARIAN AND ROMANIAN REPRESENTATIVES TO THE QUIRINAL.

5. AT THE SAME MEETING WITH CASAROLI, I DREW ON BRIEFING GIVEN ME IN WASHINGTON BY GENERAL SCOWCROFT TO RECALL THAT RECENTLY THE VATICAN AGREED TO RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VIETCONG. I SAID THAT IT MUST BE REALIZED THAT SUCH AN ACTION TENDS TO UNDERCUT THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. YET IT REMAINS TRUE THAT THE ONLY ENTITY WHICH IS INTERESTED IN THE LONG-TERM PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM AND NOT THE VIETCONG. AND, WHEN AN AUDIENCE IS GIVEN TO THE VIETCONG, IT WEAKENS THE GVN.

6. CASAROLI SAID HE APPRECIATED THE FORCE OF THIS ARGUMENT BUT, HE SAID, WHEN PRESIDENT THIEU HAD VISITED THE VATICAN IN APRIL, HE HAD LET THE POPE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GVN DID NOT OBJECT TO THE POPE RECEIVING THE VIETCONG. AT NO TIME, CASAROLI SAID, HAS THE HOLY SEE EVER REFERRED TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VIETCONG AS BEING A "PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT".
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